

shows the severe consequences that can be faced by those immigrants who fail to mention their unlawful status. Of course, the responsibility to remain here legally falls upon immigrants, but there are occasions when immigrants live up to that responsibility and are nonetheless failed by errors and backlogs on the Government's part. I hope and trust that preventing such errors will be a major priority for Mr. Aguirre. I also hope that he will use his position to battle the perception in many immigrant communities that the war on terrorism has become a war on immigrants.

At his confirmation hearing, I talked to Mr. Aguirre about the former INS employees in Vermont who will be under his jurisdiction, including those at the Vermont Service Center in St. Albans. I recommended to him that he build on the established INS workforce throughout the State by making Vermont a regional center for his agency, and I was pleased that he seemed to take that advice seriously. I am eager to work with him to see that idea become a reality.

On the national level, it was a priority for many of us in Congress that immigration services not be overlooked at the Department of Homeland Security. Although our security is paramount, the new Department must remember that our Nation's founding principals and economic health demand that immigration be handled in a fair and orderly way. After his confirmation hearing, I believe that Mr. Aguirre—himself a refugee—understands this at a fundamental level.

He faces a challenging job. I have already written him about the backlogs that plague our immigration system, and I hope that he is able to make meaningful change in that area. The President has pledged to reduce the average backlog for immigration petitions to 6 months by 2006—to do so is going to take serious investment, and I hope Mr. Aguirre will be a voice inside the administration to make that investment.

NOMINATION OF C. STEWART VERDERY, JR.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, I rise today to applaud the Senate's approval of the nomination of C. Stewart Verdery, Jr., to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Border and Transportation Security Policy. Mr. Verdery's nomination was approved unanimously by the Committee on Governmental Affairs on June 17, and his confirmation will fill a vital position at the new Department of Homeland Security. I have known Stewart for over a decade, and believe that his experience, Jeffersonian conservative principles, and personal qualities make him well-qualified to serve in the new Department.

The Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning at the Border and Transportation Directorate, Department of

Homeland Security, is the principal adviser to the BTS Under Secretary for policy development in the substantive areas within the BTS Directorate, including immigration and customs enforcement, customs and border protection, transportation security, Federal law enforcement training, and domestic preparedness. The Assistant Secretary is responsible for ensuring that policies developed for BTS and its component agencies are designed to achieve homeland security objectives as directed by the DHS Secretary and BTS Under Secretary and to fulfill the BTS mission statement to "protect national security and promote public safety by enforcing our nation's immigration and customs laws, providing an effective defense against all external threats, including international terrorists, and other threats such as illegal drugs and other contraband, while preserving the free flow of legitimate trade and travel."

Mr. Verdery is well-known to this body, having served for more than 6 years in the U.S. Senate. He first served as counsel to my senior colleague from Virginia, Senator WARNER, in his personal office and on the Senate Rules Committee. He joined the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1998 as head of the crime and law enforcement unit, and then moved to become General Counsel to the senior Senator from Oklahoma, Mr. NICKLES. In this role, Mr. Verdery advised the Senate leadership on a host of issues, including crime and law enforcement, commerce, judicial nominations, constitutional law, campaign finance, and telecommunications. He was widely respected among his peers and relied upon not only by Senator NICKLES, but by many other members of the Republican Conference and their staffs as well.

Whether managing the high-profile investigation of the disputed 1996 Louisiana Senate election, helping direct the Clinton impeachment trial, or a host of other assignments, Mr. Verdery's organizational skills, political instincts, and notable work ethics enabled him to thrive in the demanding environment of the U.S. Senate.

I had the opportunity to work closely with Stewart when the Senate Republican leadership designated him as a lead staffer for the Senate Republican High Tech Task Force, which has the goal of advancing constructive technology policy in the Senate. As chairman of the High Tech Task Force in 2001-2002, I was impressed by his extraordinary command of complex technology issues and, perhaps more important, his ability to succinctly explain the issues to others. His advice and counsel were always sound and thoughtful, and through his effective and friendly manner, he instantly earned the respect of those with whom he worked.

Stewart Verdery played a key role in the transformation of the High Tech Task Force into a lead advocate for the

technology-friendly policies in the Senate. With his assistance, my colleagues and I were better prepared to advance a positive technology policy agenda in the Senate, including: the passage of a clean, 2-year Internet tax moratorium extension; passage of the upgraded Export Administration Act reauthorization; securing additional funding for anti-piracy prosecutions; and the hard-fought effort in the economic stimulus debate to make the Research and Development tax credit permanent, to provide enhanced expensing and to include the broadband tax credit.

Mr. Verdery will be a valuable member of the team at the Department of Homeland Security. I wish Stewart, his wife Jenny and their two young children, Isabelle and Chase, all the very best health and happiness in this new endeavor.

Mr. NICKLES. Madam President, I rise today to support the Senate's approval of the nomination of Stewart Verdery as the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning at the Border and Transportation Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security.

I have worked with Stewart since his days as Counsel to the Senate Rules Committee and while he was at the Senate Judiciary Committee. He did an outstanding job in those capacities. As a matter of fact, he did such a great job I hired him to serve as my General Counsel in the Assistant Republican Leader's office. In his position there, he served not only as my counsel, but as a counsel for the entire Senate. We deal with a lot of issues in the U.S. Senate, and Stewart's counsel was invaluable to me and other Senators.

I consider Stewart and his wife Jenny to be part of the family. Not only were they married while he was on my staff, but their two children were born as well. I respect him as both a professional and a family man.

I have no doubt Stewart will excel in this new position, and it is with great pleasure that I support his nomination as Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now return to legislative session.

KEEPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SAFE ACT OF 2003—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate a conference report to accompany S. 342, the Child Abuse Protection Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the conference report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Committee of Conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 342), to amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to make improvements to and reauthorize programs under the Act, and